

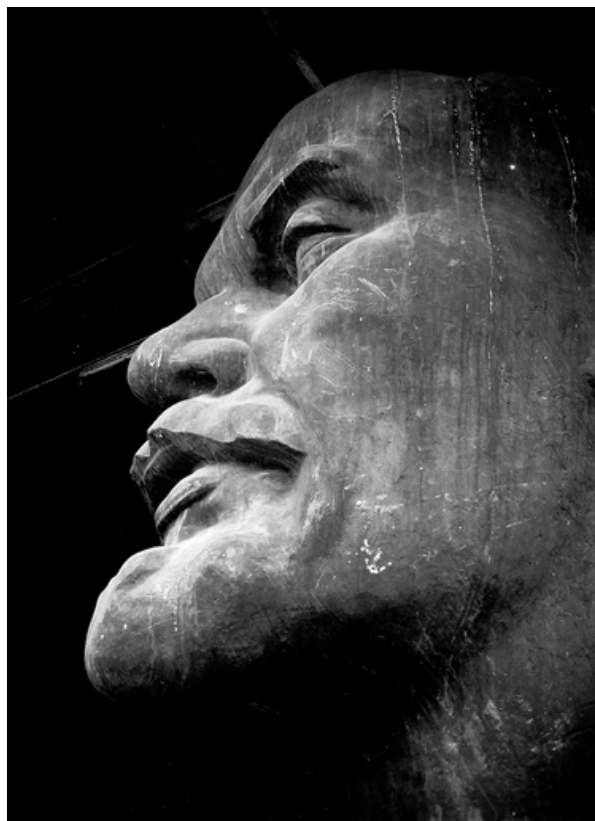


Communist University Introductions

These texts may be used as “openings to discussion” of the original reading texts that are supplied by the CU. They are not intended to be authoritative or conclusive. They are contributions to discussion like any other such contributions. The introductions are not a substitute for the reading texts.

This is the first of two booklets containing introductions to the CU “National Democratic Revolution” course.

National Democratic Revolution, Part 0



[V I Lenin, 1870-1924](#)

National Democratic Revolution: Introduction

The CU National Democratic Revolution (NDR) course will be serialised on this CU-Africa channel in the third quarter of 2015.

To see the full CU-Africa posting schedule for 2015, [please click here](#).

The NDR is the product of a class alliance (unity-in-action) against an oppressor class. The clearest original statement of this theoretical principle was made by V I Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International (2CCI) in 1920, in his Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question. We will return to the 2CCI statement in due course.

In practice, the NDR works to extend democracy to all horizontal corners of, and to all vertical layers within, the national territory and its population. In the cause of national democracy, it also manages non-class contradictions such as those of race and gender. It does not eliminate the class struggle, but it prepares society for the next necessary revolutionary step, which we refer to as socialism – the just state of the working class. The NDR is a rehearsal for a fuller kind of freedom.

The NDR is always historical, in the sense of being a practical piece of work carried out in changing objective conditions, by individuals acting through the structures that they have consciously created. This series will trace the world history of the NDR from the distant past up to the present, attempting to cover the salient features, if not all the detail.



NDR in South Africa today

The living history of the NDR in South Africa is that of the African National Congress, embodying the class alliance that is the functional heart of the NDR.

The main trade union federation COSATU, and organised labour in general, are vital components in the necessary process of rendering the mass of the people into a self-conscious, free-willing historical subject. The working class leads and lends class-consciousness and a sense of purpose to the peasantry and to the petty-bourgeoisie. The working class is indispensable to the NDR.

Labour unions are not sufficient by themselves for the NDR. It requires an organised mass-democratic national liberation movement, which in our case is the ANC. It also requires a party of generalising professional revolutionaries. That party is the SACP.

The theoretical pattern of the NDR was set in 1920 by the Comintern, and immediately afterwards by the conference of “The Peoples of the East”. Before we come to these, we will look at the ancient history of the nation - its origins and its development as a human institution.

Triumph attracting the attention of Disaster

Coming up to date, we will find, in parts of the ANC, that the NDR is treated as if it is a complete historical goal, or that it could reach stasis, or that it is an end in itself. We will expose such ideas to criticism.

The NDR story is one of the historic materialisation and triumph of an idea all around the world, but also of a new threat: that the NDR could be treated as a meaningless commonplace, taken for granted, or even worse, expropriated as a political weapon by the very forces that the NDR exists to oppose.

Unlike those who want to call closure on revolution and declare a static “National Democratic State” to be the final state, the communists know that history will insist on moving on beyond the NDR, towards the revolutionary end of class conflict itself, and towards the corresponding withering-away of the State altogether.

The challenge posed by this study of the NDR is therefore to learn how to carry out the National Democratic Revolution to its utmost possible extent, and then to be able to conceive of an even greater degree of freedom: a freedom that is beyond democracy and which is more than the mere crushing of a minority by a majority (which is the essence of democracy). True freedom is the ultimate goal.

As Lenin pointed out in “[The State and Revolution](#)”, written on the eve of Great October, 1917, the withering away of the state has to become a burning issue. Before we get to that point in our studies, we must, in the next post of this new course on the National Democratic Revolution, begin again from the beginning.



[Gaius Gracchus, 154 BC – 121 BC](#)

Roots of the NDR

With any course, one must decide where to begin. In the case of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), the course has to begin with an understanding of class struggle and of class alliances in history.

Such a study could begin as long ago as the fifth century BC in the Athenian Republic led by [Pericles](#), or with the [Conflict of the Orders](#) in the [Roman Republic](#) at approximately the same time, and it could proceed through the class struggles involving, for example, the Gracchus brothers [Pictured: Gaius Gracchus, Tribune of the People], Julius Caesar and others, that led in 27 BC to the stagnant class truce called the [Roman Empire](#), which then, during four centuries, declined and fell (in its Western half) into a rural Dark Age, which was also the genesis of feudalism. Class struggle is the engine of history. Without it, there is very little movement.

We could alternatively begin in 1512 with [Machiavelli](#), and the class struggles of Renaissance (i.e. “born again”) Italy, where multiple city-states with populations of 100,000 or more were embroiled in internal and external class conflicts.

We could go to [Thomas Hobbes](#), who published his book [Leviathan](#) in 1651, describing the politics of the bigger national states of Northern Europe (Like Britain, France, Spain and the Netherlands) which had by his time surpassed the politics of Italy to become the main theatre of recorded historical process.

These European machinations could have been our workbook and our political sandpit, for the main reason that there is a record of them. There is very little virtue to be found in this history, and the examples are mostly bad examples – examples of things to be avoided – but there is a literature.

French Revolution

But we might as well rather begin, as Frederick Engels does in the first part of his “[Socialism, Utopian and Scientific](#)” (attached), with the [Great French Revolution](#) that started in 1789. From this point on we can meet, in their developed form, the class protagonists who allied and clashed, from that time until now, in all possible permutations; alliances holy and unholy, strategic and tactical; marriages of convenience and marriages made in heaven; and we can have, for the most part, the benefit of Marx and Engels as eyewitnesses or near-to eyewitnesses.

The contending classes were: the feudal aristocrats; the peasants; the bourgeoisie; and the proletariat.

Using this work of Engels’ as a starting point has the additional benefit of introducing the rudiments of political philosophy, and leading our thoughts towards the “democratic bourgeois republic”, which is at one and the same time the highest form of political life before socialism; the prerequisite of concerted proletarian action; and a form of the State that has to be transcended.

In other words, our study of the NDR will bring us, as history has already brought us in life, to the kind of crisis that Lenin outlined so sharply in “[The State and Revolution](#),” when majority rule is no longer an adequate substitute for the free development of each as the condition for the free development of all, social self-management, the end of class struggle, the withering away of the state, and the fully classless society called communism.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, Part 1, Engels](#).

National Democratic Revolution, Part 1a



Critique of the Gotha Programme

Why does the Critique of the Gotha Programme come in here? What does it have to do with the NDR?

Because: The Gotha Programme was a Unity Programme. It was supposed to be the basis upon which the separate factions of the German Social Democrats were going to unite and go forward together.

The National Democratic Revolutionary Alliance must be a united front, broad alliance, popular front or unity-in-action. The one that Marx criticised in this document was founded on a false basis. It needed to be an honest programme, but it was not.

If you skip over Engels' foreword, you will find that the actual "Critique" is only eight pages long. It is a short read but it contains a lot. Some of it is controversial, even today – for example Marx's remarks about co-operatives (p. 9).

The person called Lassalle who Marx refers to had been the energetic leader of the politically weaker faction. By this point in time Lassalle was deceased, but his followers were still being called the "Lasalleans".

Our South African National Democratic Revolutionary Alliance does not require the creation of a monolithic Party.

Perhaps this is one reason why we have celebrated the centenary of the ANC, without the collapse of the essential class alliance.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Critique of the Gotha Programme, by Karl Marx.](#)

National Democratic Revolution, Part 1b



(Above): Barricade, Rue Soufflot, Paris, February 1848, painting by Horace Vernet

Origin of the National Republic

The Great French Revolution that started in 1789 did not immediately produce a lasting democratic republic in France. Napoleon Bonaparte's Empire, launched with a *coup d'état* on 9 November 1799, had attacked feudal monarchs all over Europe. But these events were followed during the next three decades by the restoration of weak versions of the French monarchy, culminating in the "July Monarchy" of Louis Philippe. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels anticipated a coming revolutionary upsurge and published the [Communist Manifesto](#) at the beginning of the revolutionary year of 1848.

The Manifesto's first major section is called "Bourgeois and Proletarians" and it says among other things that: *"Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - bourgeoisie and proletariat."*



Karl Marx arrested in Brussels, March 1848, drawing, N Khukov

Yet it was Marx in particular, in two great books and one short Address (see the attached and/or the links below), who described, better than anyone else, the much less simple, more complex, permutations of class conflict at the time. For example, in the following cut from "[The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte](#)" (find attached, or please download your file via the link below) it is clear that the proletariat suffered an almost immediate disaster, because it had no allies. The proletariat was isolated and attacked by all the other classes together, and massacred, in June of 1848 in Paris.

This is the situation that the proletariat must always avoid, and it is one reason why the working class must always have allies. Here is the cut from Marx's outline of events, given in the "18th Brumaire":

"a. May 4 to June 25, 1848. Struggle of all classes against the proletariat. Defeat of the proletariat in the June days.

"b. June 25 to December 10, 1848. Dictatorship of the pure bourgeois republicans. Drafting of the constitution. Proclamation of a state of siege in Paris. The bourgeois dictatorship set aside on December 10 by the election of Bonaparte as President."

In the "18th Brumaire", not only do the contenders of the Great French Revolution, the Aristocracy, the Peasantry (sometimes called the *Montagne*), the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat reappear. Also described are the clear contradictions within the bourgeois class. Plus the classless, manipulative Bonaparte, who played the four main classes off against each other for more than two decades until he lost the plot. And notably the "lumpen-proletariat" of idle adventurers who were Bonaparte's willing, and paid (with "whisky and sausages") accomplices.



Berlin, March 1848, painting

In his March 1850 Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League Marx spoke in particular of Germany, which had also caught the revolutionary enthusiasm, again in terms of a precise and dynamic comprehension of the patterns and permutations of class contradiction, and of who must ally with whom at any particular moment.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were deeply, personally and very effectively involved in these events as individuals and as organisers, and in Engels' case as a military combatant.

These events shaped the new form of democratic republic that was consolidated in France after the eventual fall of Louis Bonaparte in 1871, and after the brief life of the Paris Commune.



Barricade, Paris, June 1848, photograph

That newly-formed kind of “democratic bourgeois republic” still remains the standard form of nation-state in the world, and it is the same kind that our republic has become, here in South Africa.

This historic understanding, as well as the unsurpassed clarity with which Marx in particular describes the nature of practical multi-class struggle, can serve to prepare us for a progressively more specific, historical examination of the theory and practice of National Democratic Revolution (NDR) through the 20th Century, in Africa, and in South Africa up to the present time.

The NDR is nothing if it is not about class alliance, and about democracy on the national scale.

Marx's "[The Class Struggles in France](#)" (please find attached or download the extract linked below) is also a study in class alliance, and it complements the "18th Brumaire". It is a detailed account of the revolutionary events in France from 1848 onwards, including the rise of Louis Bonaparte. Marx was frequently in Paris during this period.

What "The Class Struggles in France" does for us here, early in our course on the National Democratic Revolution, is to demonstrate the realities and permutations of class conflict. It shows once again how the working class must have allies, and it shows how treacherous, brutal and ruthless the bourgeoisie can be. It also shows how lightning-fast revolutionary events can be. The period covered by chapter 1 is only four months, from February to June, and yet almost everything that can happen in a revolution, happened in that time. The question of the republic arises, and the necessity of supporting it. The revolutionary national democracy is crucial.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Chapters 1 and 7, Marx](#), and [Class Struggles in France, Part 1, The Defeat of June 1848, Marx](#).
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National Democratic Revolution, Part 1c



["Marianne"](#)

Permanent Revolution

Karl Marx's March 1850 Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League (attached) begins by describing the working proletariat as the "only decisively revolutionary class", and ends with a battle-cry for the workers: "The Permanent Revolution!"

In this Address, Marx is advocating all possible means of achieving a revolutionary change which, if not theoretically irreversible, would not in practice be reversed – i.e. a "permanent revolution".

"The workers' party must go into battle with the maximum degree of organization, unity and independence, so that it is not exploited and taken in tow by the bourgeoisie," said Marx, rehearsing the events of the previous two years when the bourgeois allies of the working class had treacherously sold the workers out as soon as they could secure favourable terms for themselves in the revolution against the reactionary feudal powers.

Marx then very frankly reviews the competing self-interests of the contending classes and fractions of the bourgeoisie.

"There is no doubt that during the further course of the revolution in Germany, the petty-bourgeois democrats will for the moment acquire a predominant influence. The question is, therefore, what is to be the attitude of the proletariat, and in particular of the League towards them," declared Marx.

"As in the past, so in the coming struggle also, the petty bourgeoisie, to a man, will hesitate as long as possible and remain fearful, irresolute and inactive; but when victory is certain it will claim it for itself and will call upon the workers to behave in an orderly fashion, to return to work and to prevent so-called excesses, and it will exclude the proletariat from the fruits of victory," warned Marx.

The working class must *"be independently organized and centralized in clubs,"* and *"it is the task of the genuinely revolutionary party... to carry through the strictest centralization."* Reading this section, it is clear that Marx was convinced that the building of the democratic republic and the building of the nation had to be one and the same set of actions.

The working-class tactics in alliance with the bourgeois democrats should be to *“force the democrats to make inroads into as many areas of the existing social order as possible,”* and constantly to *“drive the proposals of the democrats to their logical extreme”*.

The workers must always look ahead to the next act of the revolutionary drama. They will *“contribute most to their final victory by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, and by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organized party of the proletariat.”*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League, Karl Marx, 1850.](#)
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National Democratic Revolution, Part 2



Genesis of the NDR

The Hammer and Sickle emblem of the communists, invented in 1917, is a **symbol of class alliance** between two distinct classes: proletarian workers, and peasants.

Peasants often work hard and they are often poor, but they are not the same as the working proletariat of the towns. Nor are they the same as the rural proletariat.

So the hammer and the sickle are not two equal things. They represent two different things, allied.

Practical class politics is always a matter of alliance, and in different circumstances, different alliances are called for. Communists commonly regard an alliance between workers and peasants as normal. But proletarian parties have also made class alliances with parts of the petty-bourgeoisie or national bourgeoisie, against feudalism or against colonialism.

Alliances are normal and necessary, in order to isolate and thereby to defeat an adversary, and equally, to avoid being isolated and defeated by the adversary. Therefore, the question of the appropriate alliances in the anti-colonial and anti-Imperialist struggle was bound to arise.

The origin of the specific type of class alliance that is nowadays referred to by the term **National Democratic Revolution** can be precisely located in the Second Congress of the Communist International (2CCI), in the discussion on the National & Colonial Question, reported by V. I. Lenin on 26 July 1920 (attached), less than three years after the Great October Revolution in Russia, a revolution based on a worker-peasant alliance.

The founding Congress of the Communist International (“Comintern”) took place in March, 1919, a little more than a year after that October 1917 Russian Revolution, of which it was an integral consequence. The setting up of the Communist International was a demand that was part of Lenin’s [“April Theses”](#).

The first “International Working Men’s Association”, of which Karl Marx had been a founder member in 1864, had faded after 1871 following the fall of the Paris Commune. The Second International fell apart in 1914, when most of the Social-Democratic workers’ parties backed the bourgeois masters of war in the conflict between the Imperialist powers.

The communists, led by Lenin, had held out against that betrayal. After the revolutionary victory in Russia they lost very little time before constructing a new International. The Third, Communist International was naturally and explicitly anti-Imperial and anti-colonial, but it explicitly, carefully, and out of necessity, extended the revolutionary alliance to include parts of the bourgeoisie.

In his report to the 2CCI on the National & Colonial Question, Lenin says:

“We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist

*parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the **national-revolutionary movement** rather than of the 'bourgeois-democratic' movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a **bourgeois-democratic** movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of **peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships**... However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries..."*

In this report we find, for the first time all together, the makings of the NDR, including the name, even if the words are not quite in their present-day order. Lenin calls it "national-revolutionary", but he makes it very clear that he is talking of a democratic class alliance with anti-colonial, anti-Imperialist elements of the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries.

The 2CCI was followed within two months by the famous "[Congress of the Peoples of the East](#)", in Baku, in the southern part of what was soon to become the Soviet Union. This 1920 event was the first international anti-colonial conference, and it had huge consequences. We will deal with the Congress of the Peoples of the East in the next instalment, as a contribution to the discussion of the realisation of the NDR, the concept which had been laid down in Lenin's report.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Report on National and Colonial Question, 2CCI, Lenin](#).
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[Congress of the Peoples of the East, 1920](#)

First international anti-Imperialist congress, 1920

The 2CCI was followed within two months by the famous “[Congress of the Peoples of the East](#)”, in Baku, convened by the Communist International in what is now the Republic of Azerbaijan [Picture: delegates to the Congress of the Peoples of the East]. Its manifesto (click the link below) makes very clear the strategic confrontation that existed following the end of First World War hostilities, and the effective and menacing British Imperial victory, as they saw it.

This was the first international congress of oppressed nations against colonialism. It effectively launched the anti-colonial struggle on a new basis that bore major fruit less than thirty years later in the 1940s, with the independence of India and the victory of the communist revolutionaries in China.

In 1920, the Inter-Imperialist World War had only recently come to an end. The congress said:

“Peoples of the East! Six years ago there broke out in Europe a colossal, monstrous slaughter...

“It was fought for the partition of the world, and chiefly for the partition of Asia, of the East. It was fought to decide who was to rule over the countries of Asia and whose slaves the peoples of the East should be. It was fought to decide whether the British or the German capitalists should skin the peasants and workers of Turkey, Persia and Egypt.”

The conference manifesto goes on to detail the threat that the victorious British posed towards the Peoples of the East in their many countries, large and small. We know by now that this manifesto was not mistaken. It concludes:

“Long live the unity of all the peasants and workers of the East and of the West, the unity of all the toilers, all the oppressed and exploited. Long live the battle headquarters of this united movement — the Communist International! May the holy war of the peoples of the East and of the toilers of the whole world against imperialist Britain burn with unquenchable fire!”

The Soviet Union is no more, yet the profound change in the entire world that is the consequence of the anti-colonial movement for independence and sovereignty of nations is still with us, in the form of nearly 200 independent nations, most of which did not exist, as such, at the time of the 2CCI and the Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920, and most of which are by now national-democratic republics.

For one example of how quickly the anti-colonial movement took hold, and how close to our home this movement quickly came, the Red Trade Union International (Profintern) of the Comintern, founded one year after the 2CCI, in 1921, had by 1930 organised (in Berlin) an [International Conference of Negro Workers](#) that included Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya as well as Moses Kotane, W. Thibedi and Albert Nzula of South Africa.

We should also not forget to mention the founding of the Communist Party of South Africa under the auspices of the Comintern in 1921 in this connection, because the admittance of the CPSA was conditional upon its acceptance of the Comintern’s agreed policies, which included the NDR. Therefore the CPSA’s support of class alliance for national liberation and national democracy was not something that was added on later, but was fully present at the birth of the CPSA.

Another example of the swift, strong effect of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern on South Africa is the Black Republic Thesis of 1928 and all that went with it. We will come to it in the next part of this NDR Generic Course. The important thing to note here is that the CPSA’s basic commitment to the NDR had already existed for many years prior to the Black Republic Thesis.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Manifesto, Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East](#).



[Antonio Gramsci, 1891-1937](#)

The Southern Question

It is a mistake to treat Antonio Gramsci's contribution to political thought as substantially separated in time, or in content, from that of Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik revolutionary internationalists who were Gramsci's actual contemporaries. Gramsci was in Moscow in 1922 and 1923 and met and married his wife there. As a representative of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), he was familiar with the workings of the Comintern.

Lenin died in 1924. Gramsci was imprisoned by the Italian fascists in November, 1926, and was not released until just before his death, eleven years later, in 1937.

The unfinished 1926 document "Some Aspects of the Southern Question" is the last that Gramsci wrote before his incarceration. To understand its relevance to the

National Democratic Revolution, one can begin with the beginning of its third paragraph, where Gramsci says:

“The Northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South of Italy and the Islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies...”

Northern Italy, where there are many great cities (including Turin, home of the giant FIAT company) was by the first quarter of the twentieth century “developed” in much the same way as France, Germany and England were. But south of Rome, and on the large Italian islands of Sardinia and Sicily, the people lived very differently. In many ways the situation resembled the “Colonialism of a Special Type” that was maturing in South Africa in the same period. Colonised and colonisers were present in the same national territory.

The Italian Southerners were subjected to racial contempt, such that, as Gramsci records:

“It is well known what kind of ideology has been disseminated in myriad ways among the masses in the North, by the propagandists of the bourgeoisie: the South is the ball and chain which prevents the social development of Italy from progressing more rapidly; the Southerners are biologically inferior beings, semi-barbarians or total barbarians, by natural destiny...” and so on.

As a communist, Gramsci naturally advocated *“the political alliance between Northern workers and Southern peasants, to oust the bourgeoisie from State power.”* He follows this bare formulation with many fascinating incidences and details about the class structure and class dynamics of Italy at the time and during the preceding three decades, which had included the First World War and the subsequent rise of Mussolini’s fascists. Gramsci accompanies these narratives with an exceptional sensitivity towards the role of intellectuals, whom he comes close to treating as a distinct class.

Gramsci writes:

*“Intellectuals develop slowly, far more slowly than any other social group, by their very nature and historical function. **They represent the entire cultural tradition of a people, seeking to resume and synthesize all of its history.** This can be said especially of the old type of intellectual: the intellectual born on the peasant terrain. To think it possible that such intellectuals, en masse, can break with the entire past and situate themselves totally upon the terrain of a new ideology, is absurd. It is absurd*

for the mass of intellectuals, and perhaps it is also absurd for very many intellectuals taken individually as well - notwithstanding all the honourable efforts which they make and want to make."

Yet Gramsci regards such an intellectual break as crucial, saying:

"This is gigantic and difficult, but precisely worthy of every sacrifice on the part of those intellectuals - from North and South - who have understood that only two social forces are essentially national and bearers of the future: the proletariat and the peasants."

This introduction has included a lot of quotations, so as to assist readers to navigate through this text in between the many unfamiliar names that are there.

The simple lesson is the same as that of Lenin and the Comintern: Class Alliance will solve the National Question. The Democratic Revolution is a prerequisite for the building of socialism. This is the nature of the National Democratic Revolution.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Some Aspects of the Southern Question, Gramsci.](#)
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National Democratic Revolution, Part 3



Worker-Peasant Monument, Moscow

National-Scale Democracy

We have founded this study of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) on the practical necessity, as well as the historical fact, of class alliance, and most pointedly on Lenin's report to the 2CCI on 26 July 1920, on the National and Colonial Question.

A class alliance, or in other words a popular front, or a unity-in-action, was always necessary for the defeat of colonialism. Such class alliances were successfully put together in many countries, including South Africa, as the tactical road to strategic political independence.

Such an alliance is what is broadly known as a National Liberation Movement. What the movement is supposed to do is called the National Democratic Revolution. As much as it was nationalist, the anti-colonial liberation movement was equally international in character. The Worker-Peasant Alliance (hammer and sickle) is not just a Russian thing. It is universal.

The NDR's international dimension is solidarity with the National Liberation struggles of others, in the common fight against Imperialism.

Expansion of democracy

The National Democratic Revolution's national dimension was the enlargement of democracy. This the Imperialists invariably opposed with divide-and-rule schemes of provincial federation, regionalism, "Balkanisation" *et cetera*. Hence the continuing struggle against Provincialism, and the on-going defence of Provincialism by the reactionary remnants in our country, South Africa, today.

We now need to look specifically at the expansion of democracy to the national level. Why? Because, for revolutionary purposes, the entire working class, and the entirety of the allied classes, must unite all of their potential support, in numerical, and in territorial terms. This is a practical necessity, if the liberation forces are to defeat the well-concentrated class enemy, which is the monopoly and Imperialist-allied bourgeoisie.

The battle to spread democracy to the farthest corners of the country, and to the whole population in terms of class, race and gender, is also the battle against regional and ethnic chauvinism. This effort aims to create a centralised parliamentary democracy, or democratic republic, even if, as Lenin pointed out in

the report to the 2CCI, such a democratic republic can only be bourgeois in nature - at first.

The structure of parliamentary democracy (i.e. the democratic republic) is the organising scheme within which the polity at the national scale is conceived and arranged. It is not sufficient in itself. It is a shell that must be populated with organised elements, elements which must also be extended to the national scale, just as much as the parliamentary franchise is.

Among these organised elements are:

- The mass movement of national liberation
- The vanguard party of the working class
- The national (industrial) trade unions and their national centre
- Class-conscious national media of communication
- Many mass organisations at the national level, including Women's and Youth organisations.

Communists can be found organising, educating and mobilising, as is their duty according to the SACP Constitution, in all of these areas, and this has been the case throughout the 90 years of the Party's life. The texts that are collected together in the linked document below clearly demonstrate that the communists, even before the formation of the Party, were concerned with the extension of organisation to all parts of the population.

Early years of the Communist Party of South Africa and the ANC

The attached document, which is itself a compilation, shows that one predominately-white precursor of the Party was acutely aware that its own aspirations could not be fulfilled unless the Black Proletariat was mobilised to take the lead in the struggle. This precursor was the International Socialist League. It, like Lenin, had opposed the Imperialist war that broke out in 1914. It was later to become a component part of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) on its formation in 1921. "No Labour Movement without the Black Proletariat," it said.

After its 1921 formation, the Party quickly became predominantly black in membership, and the black cadres soon exercised a leading role in mass organisations, of which the biggest, in the 1920s, was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), formed in 1919. Note that the (white) Labour Party had been formed in 1908, and the African National Congress in 1912.

The expulsion of communists from the ICU, and in particular of **J.A. (Jimmy) La Guma**, ICU General Secretary; **E.J. Khaile**, ICU Financial Secretary and **John Gomas**, Cape Provincial Secretary, was a set-back for the working class and as it turned out, it was fatal for the ICU. This episode is also recorded in the attached document.

In 1927 **Josia Gumede** was elected ANC President and he travelled to meet the top leadership of the Soviet Union. That year was the tenth anniversary of the Russian revolution. He travelled with Jimmy La Guma, a member of the party, secretary of an ANC branch in Cape Town and a recently-expelled leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). La Guma was expelled by the ICU together with E.J Khaile for being communists. In that very same year Khaile was elected Secretary-General of the ANC at its national conference in 1927.

The CPSA and the ANC drew closer together, though not without problems. But the alliance was endorsed by the Sixth Comintern Congress in the famous “**Black Republic Thesis**” resolution, which said among others:

*“The Party should pay particular attention to the embryonic national organisations among the natives, such as the **African National Congress**. The Party, while retaining its full independence, should participate in these organisations, should seek to broaden and extend their activity...*

“In the field of trade union work the Party must consider that its main task consists in the organisation of the native workers into trade unions as well as propaganda and work for the setting up of a South African trade union centre embracing black and white workers.

“The Communist Party cannot confine itself to the general slogan of ‘Let there be no whites and no blacks’. The Communist Party must understand the revolutionary importance of the national and agrarian questions.

*“A correct formulation of this task and intensive propagation of the chief slogan of a **native republic** will result not in the alienation of the white workers from the Communist Party, not in segregation of the natives, but, on the contrary, in the building up of a solid united front of all toilers against capitalism and imperialism.”*

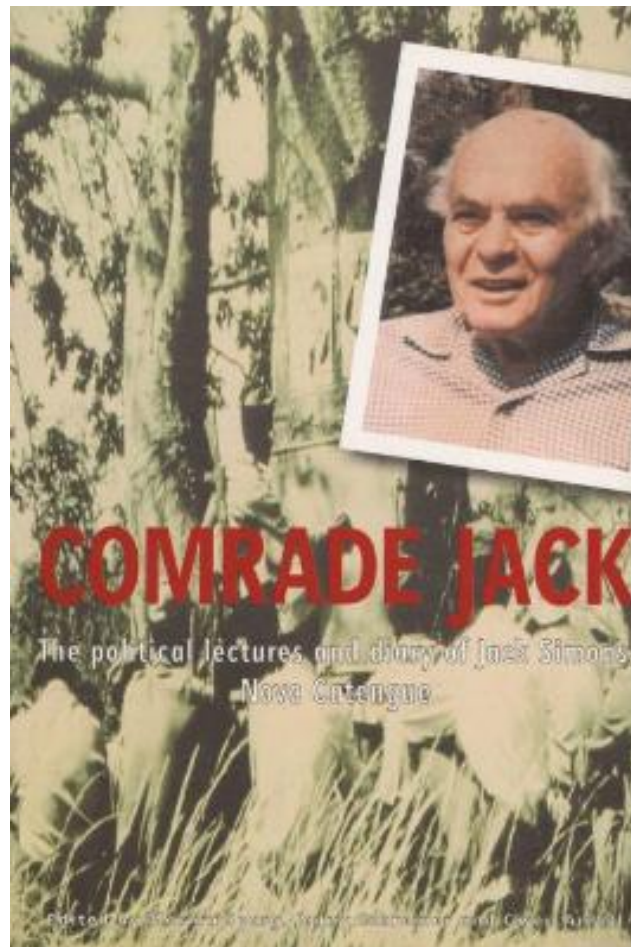
In the attached document, the Comintern resolution is followed by the famous **Cradock Letter** written by Moses Kotane in 1934, five years before he became General Secretary of the Party. It called for the “Africanisation or Afrikanisation” of

the CPSA, something that had clearly not yet fully taken place in 1934, five years after the adoption of the “Black Republic Thesis”.

The story continues in the next instalment.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Black Proletariat, ICU, Black Republic Thesis, Kotane’s Cradock Letter](#).
-

National Democratic Revolution, Part 3a



[Jack Simons, 1907-1995](#)

Socialism and Nationalism

Jack Simons and Ray Alexander (they married in 1941) were two of the greatest communists South Africa has ever produced.

Ray Alexander’s record as a trade union organiser was second to none. Her record as a founder of the Federation of South African Women is still the benchmark.

Jack Simons was a great scholar, from humble beginnings, and a great teacher. Jack Simons is the benchmark in political education. Samples of his contribution in this regard can be found in the book **“Comrade Jack - The Political Lectures and Diary of Jack Simons, Nova Catengue”**, STE Publishers and the ANC, December 2001.

The Simons’ most outstanding joint work is [“Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950”](#), published when they were in exile (from which they both lived to return in 1990). Click on the title to access the full book on the ANC web site.

In this series on the NDR, the main post for this week was the selection from **“African Communists Speak”** (1981), a book full of verbatim documents. Our selection included the “Black Republic Thesis”, and Moses Kotane’s “Cradock Letter”.

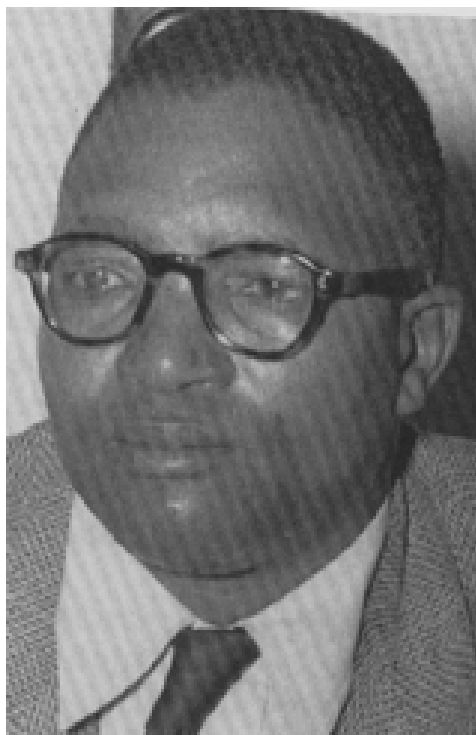
“Class and Colour” is a narrative, with footnotes indicating sources. Many people are named. “Jones” is David Ivon Jones, and “Andrews” is Bill Andrews. Other names will be more familiar.

This chapter covers the decade following the 1914-1918 inter-Imperialist war (The Great War).

This was the formative period of the Communist Party of South Africa, the African National Congress, and the black trade union movement; and the course was set from that time which continues in the form of the National Democratic Revolutionary Alliance that still exists today.

Illustration: Cover of “Comrade Jack”, a book that includes political lectures Jack Simons gave in Angola.

The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Class and Colour, C10, Socialism and Nationalism, Simons and Simons.](#)



[Moses Kotane, 1905-1978](#)

The National Question

The attached document, divided into two parts, is large, but it is of great use because it covers the period under consideration from another point of view, while nevertheless confirming the general outline that we have drawn so far. It is from Brian Bunting's 1975 book, "**Moses Kotane, South African Revolutionary**".

Kotane was the author of the 1934 [Cradock Letter](#), "For Africanisation of the Party". Five years later Kotane became General Secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and subsequently of the SACP, holding the position from 1939 until his death in 1978. He was also at some stage Treasurer-General of the ANC, and an ANC NEC member.

This document was written by Brian Bunting, a participant and witness of the events described. The period covered was one of difficulty for the Party (the CPSA). Those who had ostensibly advocated the correct "line" at the correct moment, and who, perhaps for that reason, possessed the leadership, behaved with extreme cruelty towards other comrades who had been more circumspect about the adoption of the "native republic" thesis. Wave after wave of expulsions took place.

The sectarian period of party history is a lesson on how not to behave. In the end it is clear that there were great obstacles in the way of the execution of the native republic thesis, and that those who took the difficulties seriously were some of those, like Brian Bunting, Jack Simons, and Ray Alexander Simons, who survived; while those who had expelled their comrades, blaming them for the difficulties, and who ruled the Party like tyrants, did not last.

Moses Kotane [pictured] came through, survived, and is identified forever with the defence of the NDR and of the Alliance that the NDR required. It was on the surface an alliance between the SACP and the African National Congress, but at root it was, and remains, an alliance between proletarian and national-bourgeois class elements, for freedom, and against monopoly capital and imperialism.

There is nothing exceptional or unique to South Africa about class alliance. It is an organic, dialectical and necessary factor in all class-divided societies. Nor was it imposed. The following excerpt from Brian Bunting's book is relevant:

"After he had left the Party, [Eddie] Roux was at pains to make out that the Native Republic resolution was imposed on The South African Communist Party from outside by a Comintern concerned more with the furtherance of its own interests and those of its biggest constituent element the Russian CP than with the interests of the South African people... the eventual Native Republic resolution flowed from an interchange of views between the Comintern and the CPSA, and was accepted in South Africa in terms of the policy of democratic centralism on which the international Communist movement was based.

"Certainly, there is no doubting that the impetus for the Native Republic resolution came from the nationally-minded elements in the South African CP..."

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Moses Kotane, South African Revolutionary, Chapter 2, The National Question, Bunting.](#)
-



[Ray Alexander, 1913-2004](#)

Theory and Practice

What was happening in the six years between the “Black Republic Thesis” of 1928 and Moses Kotane’s “Cradock Letter” of 1934? Why was it necessary for Kotane to ask again in 1934 for things which should have been assured in 1928?

The answer is that the intervening period was a time of terrible sectarianism in the SACP, causing a weakening of the entire liberation struggle.

In the linked, downloadable chapter Jack and Ray (Alexander) Simons tell the story of how the “Black Republic Thesis” was, within two years, perverted into a self-contradictory, mechanical formula by the very same ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International) that had laid down the famous Black Republic Thesis of 1928. This formula proposed at one and the same time a “two-stage revolution” that was to be led exclusively by a “go-it-alone” communist party. The Simons reveal the confused nature of the ECCI’s thinking with the following rhetorical question:

“If there was to be no united action, not even with leaders of Gumede's calibre and not for a programme of immediate demands, why should the party aim at an 'independent native republic', instead of an out-and-out socialist revolution?”

The ECCI's 1930 memorandum was neither fish nor fowl. It was neither one thing nor the other.

The arrival of two individuals, Wolton and Bach, who played on their connections with the Communist International (CI), triggered, in these circumstances, wave after wave of expulsions and horrible treachery of comrade against comrade. The Simons do not flinch from telling the truth about all this.

As much as it is a terrible story, yet the whole affair revolved around the same fundamental questions that resolved themselves in due course, once again, into a firm theory of National Democratic Revolution.

These are the questions of the relationship between the Vanguard and the Mass, and between the National and Class questions.

The ghosts of the sectarian period still reappear occasionally in holes and corners of our movement, and sometimes burst out with temporary ferocity.

To be fore-warned is to be fore-armed.

In this clear and easy-to-read chapter the Simons did a great service to our movement as a whole.

The picture above is of Ray Alexander Simons: worker, intellectual, trade unionist, leader of women, and communist.

The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Class and Colour, C19, Theory and Practice, Simons and Simons](#).



[Mao Zedong, 1893-1976](#)

People's Republic

In all the countries of the world, there is division into classes. The form of study or discipline that enumerates, names, describes, and narrates the changing absolute and relative condition of all the classes is correctly called Political Economy, meaning literally, the arrangement of the classes within the overall polity.

In Marxist terms this study has to be an “ascent from the abstract to the concrete”, or in other words it must make possible a view of the whole social phenomenon as a “unity and struggle of opposites”, at a particular moment in time.

The social classes are formed as a consequence of various modes of production. The study of the bourgeois mode of production in isolation, and the imagined generalisation of its laws to the entirety of current human experience, and to history, is what is known as (bourgeois) “Economics”. The confinement of political thought within the bounds of bourgeois economics would cripple it and render us incapable of projecting forward in any way, and especially not towards socialism.

Hence revolutionaries from time to time, and with varying degrees of precision and detail, are apt to prepare a balance sheet of the Political Economy at a particular moment. This is what Karl Marx did in the “[Class Struggles in France 1848-1850](#)”, and in “[The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte](#)” (1852). These were exemplary calculations, which apart from their practical revolutionary value, served forever after to educate revolutionaries about the facts of class-struggle life.

Mao Zedong's extraordinary study of the political economy of China in 1939, called "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party", is another great example of this kind of exercise (attached; otherwise please click on the first link below and download it).

This piece of writing is about as concentrated and as directly relevant to South Africa as it could be. Here you will find the relationship between Imperialism and the most backward, feudal elements; the role of the national bourgeoisie; the role of the gentry (rich peasant farmers); the concept of "motive force" and many other matters that are crucial in South Africa today.

Note that Mao was not embarrassed to talk of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. This is only one of the differences between the Chinese revolutionaries and their Soviet counterparts of a generation earlier.

The general scheme of rational class alliance aimed towards the construction of a national and democratic republic - what Mao calls the **new-democratic revolution**, is as follows:

*"...in present-day China the bourgeois-democratic revolution is no longer of the old general type, which is now obsolete, but one of a new special type. **We call this type the new-democratic revolution and it is developing in all other colonial and semi-colonial countries as well as in China.** The new-democratic revolution is part of the world proletarian-socialist revolution, for it resolutely opposes imperialism, i.e., international capitalism. **Politically, it strives for the joint dictatorship of the revolutionary classes over the imperialists, traitors and reactionaries, and opposes the transformation of Chinese society into a society under bourgeois dictatorship.** Economically, it aims at the nationalization of all the big enterprises and capital of the imperialists, traitors and reactionaries, and the distribution among the peasants of the land held by the landlords, while preserving private capitalist enterprise in general and not eliminating the rich-peasant economy."*

Taken together with the piece coming next, which Mao wrote ten years later in the year of the victory of the Chinese Revolution, 1949, this text allows us to get a sense of the dynamics of plural class formations, and of their ascent and decline in China, and the consequent practical inevitability of the National Democratic Revolution.

The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party, 1939, Mao Zedong.](#)



[Mao Zedong, 1893-1976](#)

People's Democratic Dictatorship

Ten years after the 1939 publication of Mao's near-perfect example of the way to lay out the Political Economy of a country, given in the previous instalment, the same Mao stood in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, on 1 October 1949, to declare the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Also in 1949, Mao wrote of the People's Democratic Dictatorship in a document linked below (please download it). In it he rehearsed some of the history, for example:

"Imperialist aggression shattered the fond dreams of the Chinese about learning from the West. It was very odd - why were the teachers always

committing aggression against their pupil? The Chinese learned a good deal from the West, but they could not make it work and were never able to realize their ideals. Their repeated struggles, including such a country-wide movement as the Revolution of 1911, all ended in failure. Day by day, conditions in the country got worse, and life was made impossible."

In 2015, Africans can still feel the truth of these words in relation to their own experience.

In 2015, sixty-six years after the revolution, China is still called a People's Republic, and not a socialist republic. Why is this? How is it constituted?

The Chinese nation is constructed in terms of its political economy. Mao is very clear about this, for example in the following passage:

"Who are the people? At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These classes, led by the working class and the Communist Party, unite to form their own state and elect their own government; they enforce their dictatorship over the running-dogs of imperialism - the landlord class and bureaucrat-bourgeoisie, as well as the representatives of those classes, the Kuomintang reactionaries and their accomplices - suppress them, allow them only to behave themselves and not to be unruly in word or deed. If they speak or act in an unruly way, they will be promptly stopped and punished. Democracy is practised within the ranks of the people, who enjoy the rights of freedom of speech, assembly, association and so on. The right to vote belongs only to the people, not to the reactionaries. **The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, is the people's democratic dictatorship.**"

In 2009, according to information from a Chinese delegation then touring South Africa, the number of people living in the rural areas of China was still 800 million, but the number of people in Chinese cities was by then 500 million, an enormous increase on the three million "modern industrial workers" counted by Mao in 1939.

The South African NDR

As we become more aware of what is happening, it becomes apparent that the National Democratic Revolution should never be seen as a regrettable compromise, or as a temporary or an interim measure, or even as a stage, if a stage means a halt.

The National Democratic Revolution is a positive, revolutionary move forward. It is the only direct move forward that is possible, in our circumstances, that can be accomplished in a conscious, peaceful, deliberate and rational way. This is because the NDR corresponds to the political economy of the country, and because development is class struggle.

The National Democratic Revolutions cannot fully be defined by a set of tick-boxes next to self-justifying stand-alone goods such as “non-racial”, “non-sexist” and “unified”, as much as those things may be desirable in the abstract.

The nature of the NDR and its consequent trajectory can only be properly seen in the light of Political Economy. The NDR should always be defined, and from time to time if necessary redefined, in relation to a specific class alliance for unity-in-action.

The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [People's Democratic Dictatorship, 1949, Mao Zedong](#).

National Democratic Revolution, Part 4b



[Rosa Luxemburg, 1871-1919](#)

Reform or Revolution?

Rosa Luxemburg’s “[Reform or Revolution?](#)” is a great classic of revolutionary literature. In the first place it is a thorough polemical rejection of Eduard Bernstein’s 1899 “[Evolutionary Socialism](#)”, which book Luxemburg deals with comprehensively, to the point where she concludes:

“It was enough for opportunism to speak out to prove it had nothing to say. In the history of our party that is the only importance of Bernstein’s book.”

This was true. The reformists have never made any advance on Bernstein. They only keep pushing the same busted case.

“Reform or Revolution?”, first published in 1900, was the beginning of an even more crucial polemic which we will now summarise.

Lenin published “[What is to be Done?](#)” in 1902, in response to the same book of Eduard Bernstein’s, as well as to the general outbreak of “economism”, also called “opportunism”, or “reformism”, or “syndicalism”, or in South Africa, “workerism”. In this book, Lenin clarified the basis for the vanguard communist party of professional revolutionaries of the type that the SACP, for example, is.

Lenin went further than Luxemburg, so that Lenin’s “What is to be Done?” is regarded today as the defining blueprint of the communist parties as they have been for nearly a century. The communist parties make no compromise with reformism.

Although she had demolished Bernstein even before Lenin did, yet Luxemburg in 1904 sharply contradicted Lenin’s subsequent book, and was in turn corrected by Lenin’s final reply. In the course of these polemics, the modern communist parties were fully defined for the first time, and irreversibly differentiated from the reformists, and from the reformist mass organisations such as trade unions. Let us look at this in a little more detail.

The German Social Democrats were the most numerous, well-established and long-standing of the supposedly revolutionary parties before the First World War. Luxemburg, although she was originally Polish, was a senior member of that German party.

The founding Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP) took place in Minsk in 1898. Lenin was a member, and was the editor of the party journal “*Iskra*”, which he founded in 1900.

In 1903 the Second Congress of the RSDLP took place in Brussels and London. The consequence of this Second Congress was the split between the Bolsheviks (majority) and the Mensheviks (minority), whereby the Mensheviks, though really a minority, blackmailed the majority and consequently got away with most of the spoils, including “*Iskra*”. Hence Lenin’s detailed 1904 report of this Congress is

called “[One Step Forward, Two Steps Back](#)”. It is this document that prompted Rosa Luxemburg to raise objections in the form of her 1904 “[Leninism or Marxism?](#)”.

[Lenin’s reply](#) (1904) to Rosa Luxemburg was conclusive. It settled all the open questions.

In 1905 a revolution broke out in Russia, which resolved into a bourgeois-democratic advance and the establishment of the “Duma”, or parliament, in Russia. The RSDLP held its Third Congress in that year, and Lenin wrote “[Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution](#)”, a full differentiation of the revolutionaries from the reformists. The revolutionaries make class alliances (unity-in-action) for strategic goals. The reformists capitulate, collaborate and subordinate themselves to the ruling class.

In 1914, at the outbreak of war between the main Imperialist powers, it was duly found that the Social-Democrats of the Second International, including the German Social-Democrats led by Karl Kautsky, abandoned their internationalism and sided with their separate bourgeois ruling classes – the ultimate in class collaboration. The RSDLP held out against this collapse, while Rosa Luxemburg founded the anti-war [Spartacist League](#) in Germany. In February, 1917, a second bourgeois revolution in Russia overthrew the Tsar and in October of that year the Great October (proletarian) revolution was successfully executed under Lenin’s leadership.

In January 1919, Rosa Luxemburg was murdered in Berlin by the proto-fascist “Freikorps” organisation. In the same month, the anti-communist [German Workers’ Party](#) (DAP) was founded by [Anton Drexler](#). Adolf Hitler joined it in September of that year. In the following year of 1920 the DAP was re-launched as the [NSDAP](#), better known as the Nazi Party.

In the same year of 1919 the Communist International (also called Third International, or Comintern) was formed, and by 1921 the CPSA (now SACP) had been admitted to it as a recognised Communist Party.

The attached and linked download is a redacted (shortened) version of “Reform or Revolution?” prepared for discussion purposes. Two more points can usefully be picked out at this stage. The first point is the direct statement of the matter at issue in the opening lines of Luxemburg’s Introduction:

‘Can the Social-Democracy be against reforms? Can we contrapose the social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our final goal, to social

reforms? Certainly not... It is in Eduard Bernstein's theory... that we find, for the first time, the opposition of the two factors of the labour movement. His theory tends to counsel us to renounce the social transformation, the final goal of Social-Democracy and, inversely, to make of social reforms, the means of the class struggle, its aim... But since the final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social-Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labour movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle against this order, for the suppression of this order – the question: "Reform or Revolution?" as it is posed by Bernstein, equals for the Social-Democracy the question: "To be or not to be?"

Special Relevance of this book in relation to the National Democratic Revolution

The second point comes within the text where Luxemburg describes the [Sisyphus](#)-like situation of the small enterprises under monopoly capitalism, so typical of South Africa today, as follows:

*"The struggle of the average size enterprise against big Capital... should be rather regarded as a periodic **mowing down** of the small enterprises, which rapidly grow up again, only to be mowed down once more by large industry."*
[see Chapter 2, page 10 of the attached Part 1]

Without a working-class struggle against the capitalist order, for the suppression of that order, there can only be "vain efforts to repair" it – for example, trying to make capitalist work into "decent" work.

Meanwhile the small (petty bourgeois) enterprises are periodically "**mowed down**" and hence can never come right under the monopoly power of "big Capital". These circumstances give the two repressed classes a strong basis for unity-in-action against big Capital (e.g. in a National Democratic Revolution) both nationally, and internationally.

An alliance with anti-monopoly national capital against the monopoly bourgeoisie is a revolutionary alliance in keeping with the National Democratic Revolution. But a collaboration of all, that would include the monopolists, would be akin to fascism and would not be revolutionary, or even democratic.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Reform or Revolution Part 1, Intro, and C2, C7, C9, C10, by Rosa Luxemburg](#).